Borough of Jefferson Hills

Regular Meeting of Council

November 16, 2020

The regular meeting of Council was called to order by President Bucy at 7:02 p.m. in the Municipal Center, 925 Old Clairton Road. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Council Members Ielase, Reynolds, Ruscitto, Sockman, Steffey, Vice President Montgomery and President Bucy answered to roll call. Mayor Cmar, Finance Officer Drager, Solicitor Gabriel, Lt. King, Borough Engineer Glister, Public Works Director Volpe and Borough Manager Stinner were also present.

PROCLAMATION:

 Mayor Cmar presented a Proclamation to Dr. Melissa Sovak for outstanding accomplishments both personally and professionally.

BOROUGH RESIDENT/TAXPAYER COMMENTS:

 Claire Germello, 209 Stilley Rd, spoke regarding Gill Hall Fire Dept. Asked how long will it take 885 to get crewed and in the Gill Hall Area? How fast are they going to get there without being able to speed? She recently ran a Cardiac arrest took 15 min before on scene. Officers Haas and Pokorny helped me until they got there, and they did an outstanding job. Would Gill Hall be able to help with medical assistance if they were back on board? We all want what is best for our community and request they get Gill Hall back up and running.

 Lori Bartrug, 708 Waterman Road, spoke regarding Gill Hall Fire Dept. During the November 4th agenda meeting there was a lot of discussion about the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Fund. A councilmember said it was allocated on services rendered and it could be used for truck maintenance or other services rendered. Mr. Drager talked to Mr. Bennett and he said it could be used for current year or prior year. Then someone said they reached out to Mt. Lebanon. Why don’t we follow up with the state for 100% accuracy? Did that happen? Mrs. Bucy stated she contacted Carolyn Berk Attorney auditor general allocated in 2020 but could also be used for 2021. I too reached out on November 5th to PA Borough of Fire Relief Audits Department of the Auditor General of Harrisburg, PA via email and phone. And specifically asked if Governing body has guidelines to follow when allocated funds. Email and phone call back from Mike Hoover, Audit Specialist and he confirmed the Municipality has the discretion to allocate the money as it deems appropriate. He gave me a handbook and directed me to page 4, which speaks of that allocation. It does not state it’s for services rendered, it’s for the Municipality to use at it’s discretion. Does anyone know how the formula comes to be? Section 704 of the Management guidelines tells us there are strict formulas. 50% of the funds are based on population, 50% of the funds are based on market value. How can you continue to argue how it’s allocated? Gill Hall received a $1 last year and 6,000 the former year. Decision needs to be made to give same as 885 and Floreffe. We ask the motion be made tonight to give Gill Hall a third of the funds.

 Al Fencik 2125 Adams Drive asked for an explanation of the $17 service charge. Mr. Montgomery explained it’s a temporary fund to pay off the fees occurred for bonds. Mr. Stinner told Mr. Fencik that he would look into it and follow up with him next week.

 Pete Doel, 420 Old Clairton Rd, spoke regarding Gill Hall money. Mrs. Ielase stated they didn’t do anything that was asked of them. He went through the conditions to show they did that. He states they have done what was asked and he feels the person on the liaison should know this. Asks that Mrs. Ielase to be removed from the committee and replaced with someone that is working with them. Gill Hall is responsible for 37% of the revenue coming into the Borough.

 Mrs. Ruscitto thanked Mr. Doel for his $100 donation for neighbors helping neighbors.

 Maria Hausman, 300 Rainbow Dr, spoke regarding Blackwood Plan of Lots. There is a lot of water damage since original developer cut down a bunch of trees. Wanted to know who is responsible to fix the water damage on our property? I have gotten no guarantees my property won’t be damaged.

Mr. Montgomery stated it would be the developer. We will ask him when he presents.

Mrs. Bucy suggested we jumped to Blackwood Plan of lots so that Ms. Hausman’s questions could be answered.

Mr. Housley answered Ms. Hausman’s question and stated the Developer will be responsible. The design should prevent that. First thing the trees will be cleared, and Erosion control put in and retention pond installed. Nothing should be going to their property at all. He is following Borough’s ordinance. We are not doing anything near her property. I designed this plan in compliance with borough and DEP to make sure this correct. What I Designed is compliant with the law. As far as the Benancks are concerned, I don’t know if they get water. From the beginning of this project the first thing I said I would do is put in the swell to protect them. Mr. Reynolds and Mrs. Ruscitto stated there are a lot of what if’s and but’s. If you recall the last meeting, I said that the first thing I was going to do is construct a swell to protect those residents. They are currently getting flooded without us doing anything. I will guarantee as much as the law is going to protect them. Mr. Reidenbach reviewed plan for last year and meets the requirements of Jefferson Hills. State Law said that’s what he has to do.

Mr. Montgomery stated the application was received Dec 18, 2019 and was reviewed for the last year and Gateway has approved the plan. Mr. Reidenbach, Gateway Engineers, asked Mr. Housley if he would explain the process that he has gone through to get to this point. A discussion on the procedures were outlined.

MONTHLY BILLS:

 Mrs. Steffey moved to approve the bills for the month of September be approved, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously

MONTHLY PAYROLLS:

Mrs. Ielase moved to approve the payrolls for the month of September be approved, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously.

MINUTES:

 Mr. Sockman moved the minutes of agenda meeting October 7, 2020 be approved, seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

 Mr. Montgomery moved the minutes of regular meeting October 10, 2020 be approved, seconded by Mrs. Steffey and carried unanimously.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Mr. Sockman moved to tentatively adopt the proposed 2021 Borough Budget, seconded by Mrs. Steffey. The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

 President Bucy YES

 Vice President Montgomery YES

 Vickie Ielase YES

 Mr. Reynolds NO

 Mrs. Ruscitto ABSTAINED

 Mr. Sockman YES

 Mrs. Steffey YES

Mrs. Ielase moved award contract to Schneider Downs for Borough Fire Company Internal Financial Control Review, seconded by Mrs. Ruscitto and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Steffey moved approve Resolution 20-2020 increasing the size of the Environmental Advisory Council from seven to nine members, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously.

Mr. Sockman moved Mr. Joseph Lynch to the Environmental Advisory Council (Term Expiration: 12/31/22), seconded by Mrs. Steffey. The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

 President Bucy YES

 Vice President Montgomery YES

 Vickie Ielase YES

 Mr. Reynolds NO

 Mrs. Ruscitto ABSTAINED

 Mr. Sockman YES

 Mrs. Steffey YES

Mr. Sockman moved to appoint Dr. J. Alexandra Hakala to the Environmental Advisory Council (Term Expiration: 12/31/22), seconded by Mrs. Ruscitto and carried unanimously.

Mr. Montgomery moved to appoint Ms. Kayla Grenek as the Jefferson Hills Representative to the Committee for decisions on issues related to Phase II of the Clairton Treatment Plant upgrade project (Committee will be dissolved upon completion of Phase II), seconded by Mrs. Steffey and carried unanimously.

Mr. Sockman moved open Request for Proposal for access control security system, seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Steffey moved to open Request for Proposal for Borough wide security camera system), seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously.

Mr. Montgomery moved to open position of Police Chief and retain services of PA Chief’s Association for recruitment of new chief at the rate of $12,500, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously.

Mr. Reynolds moved to approve donation of $10,000 to Officer Dale T. Provins, Jr. Memorial Fund, seconded by Mrs. Ruscitto and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Ielase moved to accept cell phone tower lease agreement from VB-S1 Assets, LLC, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously.

Mr. Sockman moved to adopt Resolution No. 19-2020 granting preliminary approval for a subdivision plan known as PS-2-2019, Blackwood Plan of Lots, seconded by Mr. Montgomery The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

 President Bucy YES

 Vice President Montgomery YES

 Vickie Ielase YES

 Mr. Reynolds NO

 Mrs. Ruscitto ABSTAINED

 Mr. Sockman YES

 Mrs. Steffey YES

Mr. Montgomery moved to adopt Resolution No. 19-2020 granting modification request to Borough Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Section(s) section §22-609.1 that requires a minimum grade of storm sewer pipe to be 2% unless approved by Borough Council, applicant is requesting 1%, for the preliminary approval for a subdivision plan known as PS-2-2019, Blackwood Plan of Lots, seconded by Mr. Sockman The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

 President Bucy YES

 Vice President Montgomery YES

 Vickie Ielase YES

 Mr. Reynolds NO

 Mrs. Ruscitto NO

 Mr. Sockman YES

 Mrs. Steffey YES

Mr. Montgomery moved to adopt Resolution No. 19-2020 granting modification request to Borough Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Section(s) section §22-609.2 that requires the maximum distance between manhole inlets to be 200’ unless approved by the Borough Council, for the preliminary approval for a subdivision plan known as PS-2-2019, Blackwood Plan of Lots, seconded by Mrs. Ielase. The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

 President Bucy YES

 Vice President Montgomery YES

 Vickie Ielase YES

 Mr. Reynolds NO

 Mrs. Ruscitto NO

 Mr. Sockman YES

 Mrs. Steffey YES

Mrs. Bucy called for a motion to adopt Resolution No. 19-2020 granting modification request to Borough Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Section(s) section §305.1, buffer riparian requirements, for the preliminary approval for a subdivision plan known as PS-2-2019, Blackwood Plan of Lots, there was no first or second motion, motion died.

Mrs. Bucy called for a motion to adopt Resolution No. 19-2020 granting modification request to Borough Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Section(s) section §305.b easements for repiran buffers, for the preliminary approval for a subdivision plan known as PS-2-2019, Blackwood Plan of Lots, there was no first or second motion, motion died.

Mr. Sockman moved to approve Change Order No. 1 from Swede Construction Corporation dated October 29, 2020 for installation of the grease trap as required by the Allegheny County Health Department Plumbing Division in the amount of $1,878.33, seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

Mr. Montgomery moved to approve Change Order No. 2 from Swede Construction Corporation dated October 29, 2020 for installation of an electrical transfer switch and external generator input receptacle to provide a backup power source for the grinder pump as required by the Allegheny County Health Department Plumbing Division in the amount of $2,973.30, seconded by Mrs. Steffey and carried unanimously.

 Mr. Montgomery moved to approve Application for Payment No. 6 from Swede Construction Corporation in the amount of $18,091.17 for the work completed on the Beedle Park Concession Stand (17-GEDF-09) Project, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Ielase moved to accept a proposal in the amount of $8,700.00 from Thermal Solutions-Ohio, Inc. for providing and installing insulation with a poly weather barrier on the 800’ of temporary gravity bypass at the PICCO landfill, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously.

 Mr. Sockman moved to purchase Mine Safety Appliances Tri-Gas Lite 3 Gas Flow Panel System for the new State Route 837 pump station facility in the amount of $14,006.00, seconded by Mrs. Steffey and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Ielase moved to accept a proposal in the amount of $4,500.00 from Lanco Electric, Inc. to install the Mine Safety Appliances Tri-Gas Lite 3 Gas Flow Panel System at the new State Route 837 pump station facility, seconded by Mr. Sockman and carried unanimously,

 Mr. Montgomery moved to approve Work Authorization dated October 29, 2020 from Gateway Engineers, Inc. for miscellaneous engineering and consulting services related to the West Elizabeth Sewer shed in the amount not to exceed $3,000.00, seconded by Mrs. Steffey and carried unanimously.

 Mr. Stinner read a letter received from Dr. Laura Williams, 2000 Laurel Ridge: She wrote, I support the Gill Hall Fire Department and would like to see them reopened. This has gone on far too long. It is the Borough’s responsibility to provide us with fire protection, and I’m very aggravated about how this matter has been handled over the past year or so.

In addition to being reopened, I would like to see the equitable distribution of the Relief 2% funds from the State, the Fire Tax Money, as well as the Borough’s contribution between thethree Borough Fire Departments. These funds come through my tax dollars, and I would like to see my share going to Gill Hall, which should be the Fire hall servicing my neighborhood and the school which is practically across the street from it.

When we moved to this plan, the Gill Hall Fire Hall was invited to our block parties and was visible at other special times.   This would make one believe that we have the benefit of protection nearby, which I understand has been removed over the past year or so, with little hope of returning soon.  I am disgusted we are being sold expensive homes in this borough on one hand while quick response is being removed from the area.  I am also disgusted at the legal costs and that week after week, month after month, this is not settled.

While your reaction to a slow response might be, “Well, we need to train more” or “We need more funding for training” the long-term damage has already been done.  You can walk away from it but we can’t.   If the players right now can’t agree on the merger, then leave it for now.  Eventually a merger might happen, but obviously right now is not the time. You have given it more of our time and money than you should have.

You are all playing a very dangerous game here.  Winter is almost here and people are using heaters and lighting fires more.   It is time to put politics aside and get us complete fire coverage NOW before you are responsible for another huge loss.  You are very lucky if such an event has not already occurred because of your inaction, but it is only a matter of time.

I and others in my neighborhood will be watching this vote closely.

Mrs. Ruscitto left at 8:59 during the reading of Dr. Laura’s letter

 Mr. Stinner read a letter received from Dave Oster, 6009 Walton Road, Mr. Oster wrote: I am calling on Councilman Reynolds to publicly apologize for his inappropriate words with Melissa Steffey at the October 12, 2020 regular meeting.  Whether they were in the executive meeting or in public, those words should not have been spoken to a fellow Council member.  Whether inappropriate remarks have been made at School Board meetings or elsewhere does not excuse Mr. Reynolds behavior.  It will set an example for everyone in our Community to follow if Mr. Reynolds publicly apologizes on his Facebook pages and at tonight’s November Council Agenda meeting.

In distributing the Foreign Fire Insurance Allocation for 2020 (to be spent on 2021 expenses), I believe that Paragraph 7416(f) (of PA Act 118 of 2010) specifies how our Volunteer Firefighter companies can spend the allocation.  There are 16 types of expenses listed and they include items such as business expenses (including legal fees), insurance for several purposes, association dues, medical expenses, training expenses, personal protection equipment, physical fitness, hoses and nozzles, and fire prevention materials for public distribution.   Many of these items appear to be related to the number of firefighters in a VFC such as insurance premiums or are definitely related to the number of firefighters like personal protection equipment.  I hope that in making the allocation that Council will consider the number of firefighters (only those residing in Jefferson Hills) in the Gill Hall and JHFR companies along with other items that need to be considered.

In considering the number of firefighters in the two companies, it will help all of our residents if the Council could provide us with the number of line officers, Firefighters 1, Firefighters 2 and those firefighters with lower certifications in the JHFR and Gill Hall VFC’s.   Council should require copies of all of the firefighter’s certifications to ensure an accurate count.  These numbers should show the totals (residing in Jefferson Hills plus those residing outside of Jefferson Hills) for each category plus the number of firefighters living in Jefferson Hills for each category.  There has been a lot of discussion on these numbers at Council meetings with no definite numbers provided.  If Council can provide definite numbers, this will address one of the major issues related to reopening the GHVFC - do they have sufficient number of trained firefighters at all levels to cover the growing Gill Hall area as a standalone VFC. If the Gill Hall VFC does not have sufficient firefighters, this would be a major indication that an operational or full merger is needed.

Mrs. Bucy asked the residents that spoke on Gill Hall Fire Dept earlier in the meeting return to the Chambers and also a representative from the fire companies.

Mrs. Ruscitto returned 9:05

Mr. Reynolds stated, I just want to say to the residents that came in here before voicing your concerns. I have to apologize to you and the rest of the residents because this is, without a doubt, been the most mind-numbing discussions that I've ever been involved in. Common sense is probably about the only thing that's been lacking in this. Thank you for sticking with us through this. I know we haven't showed very much advancement on it. Basically, been spinning our wheels for a long period of time. And thank you for sticking in there. To the Gill Hall fireman, I think it's amazing that your commitment that you have to your organization, you've stayed the course. You believed in what you were fighting for. And I think that is amazing. I think any of the junior fireman that you have over there you probably taught them a life lesson. When you believe so strongly in something, it is worth the fight, no matter what it takes, you've stayed the course you far. I hope they respect that. With that being said, I got an announcement to make. If you remember in the last month’s meeting, I talked to an individual down at Allegheny County 911 and the only thing that we haven't done yet was activated Gill Hall’s run cards. We have a lot of discussions as to how long it would take and the concerns that some of the individuals had with it. Our fire liaison kept saying that it was a minimum of 12 weeks to get the run cards in order. So, after doing the homework, I was challenged by Mrs. Steffey that Show me the proof that I talked to Gary Thomas down there that this could be done with the simple letter Gill Hall could be activated back as their independent number 179. Well, the proof is what we did, me and the Mayor we went to Allegheny County 911 and set up a meeting with them. All the information is still in their cad system. Everything's there. The Mayor, under the authority of her office, with concern of public safety, wrote a letter to Allegheny County 911 to reactivate Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company as an independent as station 179. We have received confirmation from Allegheny County 911 that Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company will be on the run cards with your same territory that you had previous to the forced shutdown from this community. You will be protecting these residents that are sitting here. They will be protecting you as of November 22, 2020. So if a call comes in on Friday. These gentlemen who have fought long and hard to protect you, they're going to be there for you now. I have to applaud them for putting up the fight to do this also, I want to take this opportunity right now to thank Mayor Jan Cmar. Jan, you have proven time and time out that you are a mayor for the residents. You hear the residents. You are always there to help the residents. I'm glad. And I'm so proud that you are mayor, that you stood up for Gill Hall. You heard the residents and you stepped in here. So, thank you, Jan

Mrs. Cmar stated A couple of weeks ago, I sent a letter to Allegheny County requesting operational services for the Gill Hall Fire Company under my authority in the name of public safety. The county responded in the affirmative and you all for our company will be online later this week. Council voted on April 13th to re-certify the Fire Company, albeit under a one-year probation. This was seven months ago, when the original de-certification date is taken into account residents of the Gill Hall area, where without fire service for almost two years waiting one more day was no longer an option. The future of fire service in this Borough can be debated endlessly, but one thing is certain, everybody that lives here should be afforded fire protection. The Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Company has promised that service and is ready to begin operations. Keep in mind that the catchment area for this fire company encompasses and protects an area that has 51.8% of the taxable assessed value in the Borough. Residents living in the Gill Hall catchment area pay real taxes being paid with no real fire service. It's simply not fair or equitable. Mayors have given the authority to intercede in emergency situations under the Borough code and under Pennsylvania's title 35 the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Service Code. Allegheny County recognizes this authority.

Mrs. Bucy stated I'd like to address the residents and Claire, I just want you to know I live right down the street from you. I live in Deer Park. So, I'm right here with you. I would also like you to know that also goes to you, Mr. Doel, And I want to thank you for being so respectful when you came to the microphone. I really do appreciate that. All of these people that are up here, whether you believe it or not, have been in favor of having a fire station at Gill Hall. You might say that we approach it at a different point of view, but one of the things that we want is the residents to have the best fire protection. We want our fireman to have the best fire protection and visiting fire people to have the best fire protection that they can have. I am a little bit confused. I felt that when we started this, we had a vow of transparency and this letter was sent on October 22nd. That was one of our goals, that we were always transparent and just so that everybody knows I was called November 10th that night. I did not know about this. I had talked to Craig Bertolini. I talked to him several times wanting to have it done correctly on 911 It's a very important thing. We don't want calls going out with wrong addresses, etcetera. And the next day was Veterans Day, so I couldn't call down there until the 12th. And that was the day that I had found out that the mayor had sent the letter, on October 22nd. I looked in our code book and I had Mr. Gabriel look in our code book, and I do not know to what you are referring to in this Borough Code book. Could you specify? Because I had asked Mr. Gabriel to look at that and he said that he does not find under the Mayor's responsibilities that you have actual authorization for that. I'm referring this to him so he can address that.

Mr. Gabriel stated, I'm in review of the Borough Code. Under the general powers of the Mayor and the duties of the Mayor, this particular power that was exercise is not set forth in the Borough Code. Doesn't seem to be expressly covered. The Mayor made reference to Title 35 which is not part of the Borough Code that governs emergency responses. The Borough, of course, is under state of emergency. However, in this particular function, it does not seem to be set forth. Neither in the Borough Code and expressly in the emergency management code.

Mr. Reynolds responded Allegheny County said it took one of three people to write the letter. The Mayor, the Borough Manager or the Council President. The Mayor of the Borough of Jefferson Hills wrote the letter. Allegheny County recognized the letter. Karen, you talk about transparency. Transparency with the residents has not been followed at all on this. The transparency in this case here was all the residents were told that this information was lost in the CAD system and so forth. Lori and Pete, spoke on it. When we went down there, all the information was laid out right across the conference room table. It was all there. The residents were led to believe that this information was gone somewhere in cyberspace and it was not. They were able to get this and not in not in 12 weeks, we've done it in two weeks. These residents have the opportunity to have fire protection. So right now, what you're talking about is saying that Allegheny County is wrong in this case?

Mayor Cmar stated, we want these people to have fire protection. I've been fighting this for two years. Enough is enough.

Mrs. Bucy asked, why didn't you do it two years ago if you if you could have done it? Mr. Reynolds stated she gave Council every opportunity to fix this.

Discussion ensued between Council members and Mayor.

Mrs. Bucy stated we still go back the same point that in January 2019 there was an ordinance passed recognizing JHFR as the only recognized a fire dept of Jefferson Hills. So, you are authorizing a non-authorized fire dept to answer calls in the Borough.

More discussion ensued between Council members, Mayor and Residents.

Mrs. Steffey move to move forward with the Matthew’s bus substation seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

11:15 Mrs. Ielase left meeting

11:15 Ms. Ruscitto left meeting

11:15 5 min break was called

11:19 Mr. Montgomery left meeting

11:19 Mr. Sockman left meeting

11:24 meeting called back in session

11:25 Mrs. Ruscitto returned to meeting

Mr. Reynolds moved to change the ordinance and add Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Co. as a recognized fire company and respond to call, seconded by Mrs. Ruscitto. The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member: Motion dies for not having a quorum.

 President Bucy NO

 Vice President Montgomery NOT PRESENT

 Vickie Ielase NOT PRESENT

 Mr. Reynolds YES

 Mrs. Ruscitto YES

 Mr. Sockman NOT PRESENT

 Mrs. Steffey NO

12:31am Mrs. Steffey left the meeting

Mrs. Ruscitto moved to continue meeting on Wednesday, November 18, 2020 at 6:00 seconded by Mr. Reynolds, carried unanimously.

Borough of Jefferson Hills

Regular Meeting of Council

Continued from November 16, 2020

November 18, 2020

The regular meeting of Council was called to order by President Bucy at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Center, 925 Old Clairton Road. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Council Members Ielase, Reynolds, Ruscitto, Sockman, Steffey, Vice President Montgomery and President Bucy answered to roll call. Finance Officer Drager, Solicitor Gabriel, Chief Roach, Lt. King, and Public Works Director Volpe were also present. Mayor Cmar, Borough Manager Stinner and Engineer Glister were not present.

Mr. Gabriel made a brief statement that this meeting was a continuation of the meeting of November 16, 2020. Part of item 21 needs voted on then will move to item 29 and continue the meeting.

Mr. Sockman moved to adopt Resolution No. 19-2020 granting modification request to Borough Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Section(s) section §305.1 and §305.b buffer riparian requirements, for the preliminary approval for a subdivision plan known as PS-2-2019, Blackwood Plan of Lots, seconded by Mrs. Ruscitto, carried unanimously.

Mr. Reynolds thought it would be helpful to do a pro and con lists on why Gill Hall Fire Company should be reactivated. There were several pros and cons listed on the white board during the discussion.

6:26 Mrs. Ruscitto left meeting

6:30 Mrs. Ruscitto returned

6:39 Mr. Reynolds left the meeting prior to vote after motion

6:40 Mr. Reynolds returned to the meeting

6:44 Mrs. Steffey left the meeting prior to vote after motion

6:47 Mrs. Steffey returned

 Mrs. Steffey stepped down as fire hall liaison, Mr. Reynolds asked to be put on the committee.

Mr. Sockman moved to temporarily decertify Gill Hall Fire Co. until such time they can sit down with fire liaison and work out something equitable where they can be operational. He then added to motion that they should meet and have an exact probation plan for December 9, 2020 meeting, seconded by Mrs. Ielase. The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

 President Bucy YES

 Vice President Montgomery YES

 Vickie Ielase YES

 Mr. Reynolds NO

 Mrs. Ruscitto NO

 Mr. Sockman YES

 Mrs. Steffey YES

6:52 Mr. Reynolds left the meeting

6:54 Mr. Reynolds returned

Mrs. Bucy read a Statement from Jefferson Hills Fire Rescue’s President John Thatcher of 604 Gill Hall Road - also made as president of Jefferson Hills Fire and Rescue:

I wanted to address some of the misstatements made by Councilman Reynolds at Monday's Council meeting, regarding the nature of JHFR and the status of this entity:

1. I have attached copies from the Pennsylvania Corporation Bureau search on-line, which I suggest any resident of Jefferson Hills to conduct. They show that both **Jefferson Hills Fire & Rescue Inc and Jefferson Hills Fire & Rescue Relief Association** as active, non-profit corporations. We are a legitimate, fully functioning fire company, and these documents offer our proof to anyone that questions it. Please note that the date of incorporation for both entities was March 12, 2019 - over a year and a half ago.

2. When Jefferson Hills Council voted to direct the funds from the 2019 Relief money allocation, it was done in November - almost 8 months after we were registered as a fully functioning fire company. Much of the funds were used in 2020 to purchase new turnout gear, tools, and radios for our firefighters. We need funds for the active firefighters for 2021. We now have over 70 active firefighters in our organization - at least 40 of them have FF 1 and at least 20 have FF2. Plus, we have many members that have the additional certifications to be line officers. We are more than willing to offer supporting credentials.

3. In addition to the state registration being approved, we also obtained:

a. our federal EIN approval

b. our federal 501-c-3 approval from the IRS to receive donation of public funds,

c. our state sales tax exemption registration,

d. we have bylaws,

e. we've had numerous membership meetings with recorded meeting minutes,

f. we have checking accounts, and

g. we even have our approval from the US Postal service as a non-profit, to receive discounted postage rates.

The point is, we have done everything necessary to be considered a fully active, volunteer fire service for the Borough of Jefferson Hills.

4. In addition to all of these documents, JHFR has a signed agreement with Jefferson 885, Floreffe and JFR – EMS, to share all of their buildings, vehicles and equipment so as to provide an operational merger of the fire service in Jefferson Hills. This is a temporary arrangement until which time all of these assets are officially donated to JHFR. With that agreement, we are, right now, a functioning and fully certified volunteer fire service that covers the entire Borough of Jefferson Hills. The vote for this operational merger was supported by Southwest Regional Ambulance. We provide mutual aid to the surrounding communities and we have insurance.

5. The assets have not been donated and the consolidation has not been completed at this time, because of all the petty politics going on within the Borough. Until the petty politics end, the long-time members of the individual fire stations are hesitant about transferring their assets. They want to be sure to have the full support of the Council for the new fire service before this final step is taken. So, when I stated several months ago that we weren’t fully consolidated, it only refers to the assets not being transferred. But we are a bona-fide, fully functioning, and operationally merged fire service. This is not the situation that was characterized by Councilman Reynolds on Monday night as “not a legitimate fire service”.

6. Another point I want to make concerns the status of volunteer fire companies across our state and across our country. Back in 1975, our state had an estimated 350,000 volunteers – now we have less than 50,000. That’s a huge loss of members. And this loss of volunteer firefighters is also occurring through the country – not just in Pennsylvania. So, when we reached out to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), they affirmed that the entire state is very much in support of consolidating. In addition, the federal programs from FEMA also support the consolidation of volunteer fire companies.

7. When we were in the process of submitting for our 501-c-3 non-profit designation from the IRS, we were told it would take 10-12 months for the approvals. So, we reached out to US Congressman Mike Doyle’s office for support. Once we discussed the situation with him, his office was instrumental in getting us the approval in less than one month!

8. Furthermore, when we were in the process of obtaining our Sales Tax Exemption form the PA Department of Revenue, we were again told that it’s in the middle of corona virus, and unlikely that we’d get our approval anytime soon. So, we reached out to PA Congressman Mike Puskaric’s office and he was instrumental in getting us approval also within one month.

9. The point is, this is not a Republican or Democrat issue. But rather, both parties see the benefit of Consolidation both statewide and nationwide, and both have been willing to support our efforts along the way.

10. We can make any of the supporting documents available to Council members if they are interested

 Mr. Sockman moved to approve the distribution of the Pennsylvania Foreign Fire Insurance allocation in the amount of $66,258 to JHFR Relief, seconded by Mrs. Ielase. The vote was not unanimous, and a roll call vote was taken. Per the Borough Code, which requires that the minutes show the actual votes by name, below are the votes of each Council Member:

 President Bucy YES

 Vice President Montgomery YES

 Vickie Ielase YES

 Mr. Reynolds NO

 Mrs. Ruscitto NO

 Mr. Sockman YES

 Mrs. Steffey ABSTAINED

Mr. Sockman moved to designate Solicitor Gabriel and/or President Bucy as the official Jefferson Hills Borough representative authorized to communicate with Matthew Brown, Chief of Allegheny County Emergency Services, and Gary Thomas, Asst. Chief and 911 Coordinator, as to all issues pertaining to 911 and the VFD run cards, seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

REPORTS:

Engineer Glister reported

* + - Not present

Finance Director Mr. Drager reported:

* + - Preliminary budget is out

Communications Relations Coordinator

* + - Report in the packet

 Public Works Director Mr. Volpe reported:

* + - Nothing further to report.

 Police Chief Roach reported:

* + - Nothing further to report.

Borough Manager Mr. Stinner reported:

* + - Not present

 Borough Solicitor Gabriel reported

* + - Council met in executive session to talk about personal and litigation matters.
		- UPMC case, AUUE was ordered to file brief by December 2nd. Then the resident’s attorneys, the Borough Zoning Hearing Board and the Borough will have 30 days to submit our briefs.

Mayor Cmar

* + - Not present

GENERAL BUSINESS BOROUGH RESIDENTS:

Mr. Pete Doel asked Mrs. Ielase if she had a fever on Monday, how was she allowed to be here. Mrs. Ielase stated she did not have a fever; her temperature was rising from the pain.

Mr. Reynolds asked Pete Doel if he would like to be put on the liaison committee for fire dept. and asked Council to appoint him for it. Mrs. Bucy stated she will address it when they get to Borough Council comments.

GENERAL BUSINESS BOROUGH COUNCIL:

Mr. Sockman stated:

He hopes we can get this worked out so Gill Hall can become an active fir hall in this community. Given the proper attention to the detail it can be done.

Mrs. Ruscitto stated:

My thanks to pastor Pete Dorfler, Redemption Hill Church for their generous donation to Council of Neighbors and other residents that have donated this past week. I will shop this week and pack boxes for residents in need.

Council session tomorrow is cancelled and would be rescheduled for Monday the 23rd

Mr. Reynolds stated:

I wish Mr. Dragger and the Jaguars good luck in the state playoffs this weekend.

Everyone online knows that Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Co is having a soup sale this Saturday to go and will deliver if needed.

Thanked Jan Cmar for attempt to right a wrong

Apologized to Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Co. I will not stop fighting for you and the residents

Mrs. Steffey stated:

Congratulated D1 youth football for wining division and the D3 Little Jags won their Superbowl game this weekend. Also, good luck to the high school football team this weekend.

 Discussed her discuss and displeasure for the way this Council has been run. We have become a laughingstock. People need to sit down and go through their Code book and Roberts rule book. A 6-hour meeting is not appropriate. We need a Council that knows the procedures are and we need to stick to them.

Mrs. Ielase stated:

Added a note about blackwood acres. She hopes the residents will be content with this motion at this point with the feedbacks that we have gotten. We need to work on the zoning and bring business to 51 corridors

Mr. Montgomery stated:

Reminder to Borough Officials we need to take the NIMS training by December 2nd. If you don’t take it, it makes it difficult to get FEMA or PEMA money.

Mrs. Ielase added:

The Library is handing out gift bags from December 1st to Christmas in lieu of light up night.

Mr. Reynolds added:

Asked Brian Hudson, with this recent decertification of Gill Hall, does that mean the 7 new fire fighters taking classes will not be able to continue with their classes? Mrs. Bucy stated she would look into that.

Mr. Hudson stated he cannot finish class now that they are decertified, and the 7 new members will not be able to start their classes.

Mrs. Bucy stated:

On behalf of Council Happy Thanksgiving and she hopes everyone stays safe with their families at this time with the pandemic.

She also stated, I take full responsibility as president that these meetings have been out of control. Part of the issue is the intensity of topics. People talking over one another. It’s been told to me that I don’t gavel enough so I am going to make every attempt to do that more to have more control over the meeting. I don’t want to see the perception we are putting out there comes a reality. I want to work together. Mr. Reynolds stated he would like to be on the fire liaison committee and Mrs. Steffey left. Is there anyone else that would like to be on it? Mr. Reynolds, I am going to put you back on the liaison, but I would like you to remember your relationship with other fire companies. We are the community of Jefferson Hills Borough and if we would spend more time pointing out the strengths of people instead of past grievances and histories we would be in better shape. I would like for Gill Hall sit down and see about getting probation put together and come up with a solution.

ADJOURNMENT:

President Bucy adjourned the meeting at 8:01 p.m. on motion by Mr. Montgomery seconded by Mrs. Ielase and carried unanimously.

John P. Stinner

Secretary/Borough Manager